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SUBJECT: NORTHERN POLITICIANS SHARE THEIR PERSPECTIVES ON
PEACE AND JUSTICE WITH DAS JAMES SWAN

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Africa Bureau Deputy Assistant Secretary James Swan discussed the prospects for peace, the commitment of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Government of Uganda to a negotiated settlement, justice and accountability mechanisms, and potential pressure on the LRA would be useful in moving the process forward on May 8 with northern parliamentarians. Members of parliament from non-Acholi districts felt excluded from humanitarian assistance efforts. Another MP raised the issue of the LRA's designation of as a terrorist organization as blocking negotiations. Debate also occurred about the impact of the release of women and children would have on the LRA's willingness to negotiate. Several of the parliamentarians view the International Criminal Court indictments as an impediment to the process. Some of the MPs that have attended sessions at Juba expressed disappointment at the obstructionist behavior of the LRA delegates at Juba. Finally, one MP stated that additional pressure on the LRA could be counterproductive. End Summary.

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OPPOSITION LEADER LATIGO
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¶2. (SBU) DAS Swan, Ambassador Browning, P/E Chief, and USAID Democracy and Governance Deputy Team Leader met with the Leader of Opposition, Morris Latigo on May 8 on a range of issues. Latigo is from Pader District in northern Uganda. Opposition MPs represent all of the northern districts, a political reality that contributes to the feeling of northern marginalization. According to Latigo, if the LRA negotiations fail, it would be difficult for northerners to go back to the previous situation of camp living. Latigo said because most northerners are moving out of the camps, that they would support a more robust military security cordon should the LRA re-enter Uganda. Latigo stated that LRA leaders have accepted that they would have to face some consequences for their actions.

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OTHER PARLIAMENTARY VOICES
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¶3. (SBU) During a separate meeting on May 8 with twelve parliamentarians from the LRA-affected districts in northern Uganda, DAS Swan discussed the prospects for peace, the commitment of the LRA to a negotiated settlement, justice and accountability mechanisms, and what pressure on the LRA, if any, would be helpful to move the process forward.

¶4. (SBU) Several non-Acholi parliamentarians expressed a feeling of exclusion from the benefits of humanitarian assistance. They stressed that the LRA-affected "north" goes beyond the Acholi region, where relief and development efforts appear to be focused. One MP voiced concerns over alleged donor promises to internally-displaced persons that were not being kept, specifically the resettlement kits that

internally-displaced persons (IDPs) felt were promised. Ambassador Browning assured the parliamentarians that U.S. Government funding is spread throughout the districts.

¶5. (SBU) Reagan Okumu, member of Parliament from Gulu District, requested more U.S. involvement in the Juba peace process. He stated that the GOU's emphasis on the LRA as a terrorist organization was overshadowing a resolution and threatening the peace negotiations. The LRA needed to be de-linked from the war on terror and from Uganda's past relationships in eastern Congo. He acknowledged that the GOU has a greater role to play in a resolution to the issue because of the LRA's implications within the region. Another MP asked what were the implications of the LRA being on a U.S. terrorist list. Ambassador Browning and Swan assured the parliamentarians that the LRA's presence on the terrorist designation list was not an impediment to the negotiations. Swan emphasized the importance that the U.S. placed on the African mediation efforts to end the conflict.

¶6. (SBU) Okello Okello from Kitgum District noted that the security situation had improved to the point where northerners could travel at night for the first time in twenty years. Okello attended the resumption of the talks and was disappointed by the obstructionist behavior of the LRA delegates. Okello stressed that if there was no good faith on the part of the delegations, Juba would not bring anything to northern Uganda. Many of the members of parliament believe that the ICC remains a roadblock to the process because the LRA leaders will not sign a final agreement as long as the charges remain.

¶7. (SBU) Betty Amongi, from Apac District and an observer in some of the Juba negotiating sessions, stated that she

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believes that Kony had "become willing" to go to a Ugandan prison rather than The Hague. She advocated that the GOU develop a combination of relevant local mechanisms (Acholi, Lango, Teso, and West Nile) and a national legal process for presentation to the LRA leaders and to the ICC. She also pointed out that the donor-funded Juba Initiative Fund does not provide for the presence of leaders from the LRA-affected communities.

¶8. (SBU) Jimmy Akena, the son of former President Milton Obote from Lira District, played an important role in keeping the LRA at the negotiating table in October and November of 2006, according to government negotiators. Akena expressed concern that additional pressure on the LRA in the form of military threats or increased Congolese involvement could cause the process to lose momentum. He said that the current security situation gave the IDPs "breathing space" to regain their lives.

¶9. (SBU) Beatrice Atim, from Kitgum District, and other female parliamentarians want more pressure on the LRA to release children and increased involvement by women in the peace process. However, this proposition elicited some dissent from the other parliamentarians present. Atim added that the LRA viewed as "unnecessary" the demand to release the children, some of whom they claimed were not abductees but LRA family members. Akena stated that the release of the captives would make the LRA leaders feel more vulnerable to attack and therefore less secure, which could prolong the negotiations.

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COMMENT
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¶10. (SBU) The parliamentarians appreciated the opportunity to share their views with high-level U.S. officials. Northern parliamentarians are frustrated that they are not playing a larger role at the negotiations as the elected representatives of the people of the north. The MPs are

particularly disillusioned with the LRA delegates at Juba and have told them that they do not represent the interests of northern Ugandans. The Government of Uganda recognizes that these parliamentarians are a strong counterbalance to the LRA delegates and has made space on its team for two representatives of northern constituencies, parliamentarians, local elected leaders, and religious and traditional leaders. The filling of the slots is on a rotational basis.

CHRITTON